

The Budgetary Cost of The

Force de Frappe

(A Study Made by the Association "Socialism and Democracy")

Le Monde, Paris, 17 July 1964

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"Le Monde" inserts another document in the file of the striking force [force de frappe] by publishing a study by the Association ■ of Socialism and Democracy (22 rue de Pontoise, Paris 5).

This organization, which is made up of active politicians and trade-unionists, engineers and technicians, devotes itself to concrete research carried out from a socialist point of view. Like others, it is interested in the military policy of the government. But before adopting an overall position, it carried out a thorough analysis of the various facts connected with the problem.

Because of the extensiveness of its documentation and its new character, this particular study of the budgetary difficulties of the force de frappe seems to present a certain amount of clarity in a field where the appearance of official documents leaves much to be desired.

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Economic considerations are certainly not decisive when it is necessary to ensure the security of a country, and it is normal to accept sacrifices for an effective defense. However, it is still necessary to measure the extent of the sacrifices demanded, the efficacy of the policy proposed; however, the government has strained its ingenuity to hide the sacrifices, and it refuses to reveal the contradictions in its policy.

We are seeking first of all to define the ^{an}meeting of the figures furnished by the government or by official sources sufficiently close to it to be considered unimpeachable, and we submit to the total without vouching for the reliability of the individual items. We then look into the reliability of these figures and the uncertainties which affect certain decisions. This will finally lead us to ask if the military policy announced for the future is realizable in the budgetary framework established by the government, and to indicate the choices which probably will be forced upon it.

I. Budgetary Proposals

The budget of 1964, "at the same time the last of the law - program of 1960 and the first year of the application of the future law - program 1964-1970" (opinion of Mr. Le Thevle on the credits of the Ministry of the Armed Forces for 1964, in the name of the Committee of National Defense and the Armed Forces of the National Assembly, p 3) has led to discussions which permit, even before the

presentation of the proposed law - program 1964-1970 - a proposal which Mr. Messmer, Minister of the Armed Forces, must present in time for the Assembly to discuss it during its next session - to get an idea of the general trend of development of military expenses.

The military expense "package" in 1964, a total which should not be exceeded in principle, is 20 billion (1) (more precisely 19,825,000). According to Mr. Messmer the seven year plan 1964-1970 envisages an annual increase of this "package" of a billion per year; as listed in the table below:

	<u>Billions</u>
1964	20
1965	21
1966	22
1967	23
1968	24
1969	25
1970	26
Total	161

(1) All the figures are expressed in 1964 francs

The plans for a definite period conceived in 1959 which have inspired the law-program 1960-1964 have had to be revised and their objectives for 1970, writes Mr. Le Theule, have been slightly reduced: They are at the present time:

" - Development of a strategic nuclear force;

Organization of a striking force made up of five mechanized or armored divisions;

...and a light overseas striking division...

Progressive organization of seven brigades for the operational defense of the territory."

(Report of Mr. Le Theule, p 4; see article of Mr. Messmer in the Review of National Defense, May 1963, pp 748-761.)

Can these plans be kept within the "package of 161 billion foreseen by the government? Will it not be necessary to either abandon a large part of the objectives, or accept considerably larger expenses, at the risk of aggravating the deficit in public finances? This is what we are trying to determine.

(1) Equipment Expenses

Military credits are earmarked for operational expenses (section III of the Armed Forces budget) or for equipment expenses (section V).

The equipment credits in section V include, in addition to the expenses directly connected with the production of classic armament, for which there is established "a sort of regular system" (report of Mr. Le Theule, p 17), all expenses connected with the establishment

of bases and military installations (substructure), with the production of munitions and equipment for units, with studies, research, the development of prototypes, on which it is impossible to realize any economies.

They include in addition expenses directly connected with the creation of a striking force (strategic nuclear force), which have an absolute priority and which can be calculated.

In fact, if we are to believe the military men who have edited Century of Damocles (L'Express of 12 March 1964, p 7, has revealed that this work, attributed to the "Grenelle Club" is the work of the information, research and cinematographic service of the Armed Forces), the seven year plan will retain in the period 1964-1970, for atomic armament, average annual appropriations corresponding to one fourth the budget of the Armed Forces. Thus, taking into account the budget of 20 billion ^{ned} plans for 1964, the increase of military expenses up to 1970..., the probable cost of the French nuclear strategic force will be about 35 to 40 billion francs expressed in terms of 1963 prices" (pp 74-75).

If we refer to the table above and we admit that these expenses for the strategic nuclear force may well represent an average of 25 percent of military expenses, we are led to adopt rather the total of 40 billion. On the other hand, according to M. Clostermann, reporter, in the opinion of the Committee of National Defense for the Aviation Section, it is necessary to expect for these

expenses, which represent in 1964 a total of 3,685,000,000, "and
ascending curve of increase...of about one billion per year "for
the period 1965-1966" (report of M. Clostermann, p 3).

This leads us to the following table:

1964	3.7 billion [francs]
1965	4.7 billion
1966	5.7 "
1967	6.5 "
1968	6.5 "
1969	6.5 "
1970	<u>6.5</u> "

Total 40.1 billion

But since the strategic nuclear force is to have the benefit of absolute priority, since the Chief of State has involved his prestige in its establishment, it is planned to establish other forces, the approximate cost of which has been revealed either by Mr. Messmer or by the budget reporters. Specifically, they are the following:

A. Ground Army. ^{an operational} "The establishment of ~~a~~ force made up of five mechanized ~~or armored divisions~~...and one light division for overseas operations, especially equipped and trained and provided with means appropriate for ^{operations} ~~abroad~~ abroad" (report of Mr. Le Theule, p 4,); the cost of each of these mechanized divisions is about two billion (Mr. Messmer, in the Revue des Deux Mondes, 15 February 1962, p 485); the cost of the light division can be estimated at one billion.

Five mechanized divisions at two billion a piece;

	<u>10</u>	billion
one light division	<u>1</u>	"
Total		11 billion

B. Air Section. Mr. Clostermann, in his report, states;

"These five armored divisions planned for 1970 provide for aerial cover, short and long-range reconnaissance and tactical operations. Without this indispensable aerial support, these large ground units would be completely useless" (p 16).

It would seem that one must expect at least the following ~~development~~ ^{development} work:

a. A Vtol (vertical takeoff and landing) fighter aircraft which it is "practically impossible" to make operational "without a series of approximately 20 preliminary machines" (p 17). It is reasonable to estimate the ^{cost of the} production of these approximately 20 machines at one billion.

b. A light tactical aircraft "at a very low net cost, a series of 100 of which should be initiated as quickly as possible"...(p 17). The probable cost of the 100 machines: One billion.

c. An 8-ton cargo aircraft without which "no African or European operations will be open to us tomorrow" (p 18).

This machine, the Transall, should be produced jointly by France and West Germany; the French requirements amount to 50 Transalls, at a probable cost to France of 1.5 billion.

d. For the Brequet, 941, a transport aircraft with very short takeoff requirements, authorizations under the program only permit the starting of a small number of preliminary-series aircraft between now and 1966; nevertheless, provisions should be made for this machine and for the various materials required by the Air Force for expenses^{ditures} of approximately 2.5 billion between 1964 and 1970.

Thus, for the air section, we come to the following table:

20 preliminary series Vtols	1 billion
100 light tactical aircraft	1 "
50 8-ton Transall cargo aircraft	1.5 "
Brequet 941 and miscellaneous	<u>2.5</u> "
Total	6 billion

C. Naval Section. If one can believe Mr. Rene-Georges Laurin, the "naval" reporter of the financial committee, "There exists a doubt...as to what the Second Plan, which is to be presented to Parliament during the course of 1964, will contain. This plan is still in the study stage, but it is already known that it will not provide, during the 7-year period, running from 1964 to 1970, for the construction of new tonnage exceeding 55,000 tons, including here the construction program for atomic submarines and missile-launching frigates"... (report of Mr. Laurin, p 25). The only atomic submarine (6,000 tons), whose launching is expected before 1970, has already been included in the strategic nuclear force, and thus the figure should amount to a total of 49,000 tons.

One can evaluate (according to Mr. J. Hebert, in the name of the Committee for National Defense, p 8) the net cost per ton of a modern vessel and its electronic equipment at 60,000 francs. For 49,000 tons, this amounts to 3 billion francs.

To this figure should be added the expenses involved in naval aeronautics. For anti-submarine warfare, "the participation of the naval air arm in the missions planned by NATO calls for a number of aircraft in the vicinity of 100" (p 25). The Neptune aircraft should be replaced by Atlantic patrol aircraft whose cost can be estimated at 0.8 billion for the period from 1964 to 1970. As for the Super-Frelon helicopter, which is indispensable for providing armament for the helicopter-carrier La Resolue, even if the production of this aircraft (should be) limited to 30 units for the needs of the Navy, whereas initially 200 units ^{altogether} were planned for the needs of the Navy, but also for the ground army, the Air Force and West Germany" (p 25), the expected expenditures are 0.3 billion, at a minimum.

To summarize:

Navy:

Vessels of the Fleet 3 billion

Naval Aeronautics:

Atlantic 0.8 billion

Super-Frelon 0.3 "

Total 4.1 billion

The new materials, then, represent the following in the total:

Ground	11 billion
Air	6 "
Navy	<u>4.1</u> "

Total 21.1 billion

To these figures ~~there~~ should be added the sums necessary to cover the production of armaments already obligated, as follows.

Ground	3.8 billion
Air	6.7 "
Navy	<u>2.6</u> "

Total 13.1 billion

So far, we have not taken anything into consideration but major items planned for under the heading of production of armaments. Now it is appropriate to add to the expenditures to be devoted to that purpose the very important one which are intended simply to cover current requirements (research, armament, miscellaneous, production, equipment on the ground, overhead, etc.). It is necessary, for each of the three arms and also for the joint section, to start with current figures, and, providing only for a very modest augmentation of three percent per year by comparison with the preceding year, one obtains the following figures:

Current Requirements	1964 Expenditures (in billions of francs)	1964-1970 Expenditures
Air	0.950	7.3
Naval	0.350	2.7
Ground	0.700	5.4
Joint	0.500	<u>3.8</u>
Total		19.2

For expenditures for equipment for the three arms and the joint section (heading V), that would make a total of:

	(billions of francs)
Strategic nuclear force	40.1
New Materiel:	
Ground	11
Air	6
Navy	4.1
Covering production already obligated	13.1
Current Requirements	<u>19.2</u>
Total	93.5

2) Operational Expenses

For the three sections and the joint section, the total operational expenses provided for 1964 is 10.7 billion. This amount, writes Mr. Le Theule (pp 14-16), signifies that "serious deficiencies remain": Inadequate credits provided for the maintenance of materials; inadequate allowances provided for the purchase of fuel, leading to a new reduction of existing stocks; absence of regulations in favor of the soldier, of the draftee...nothing is provided in short to raise the pay of the soldier (30 cents per day) to a merely decent level.

The portion of operational expenses in the total military expenses has already been reduced as a result of the cessation of operations in Algeria (from 67.5 percent in 1962 to 54.2 percent in 1964; report of Mr. Le Theule, p 13). Now about 60 percent of these expenses are connected with forces now in service, which one can vary to a certain extent; but about 40 percent of these expenses represent expenses for the maintenance and operation of installations and equipment and they are very rigid; it is hardly possible to carry out any economies here. Possible reduction of forces after 1964 are contrary to announce^d proposals. ("At the end of 1964, the Armed Forces will reach a level close to the figure fixed as an objective by the long term plan", report of Mr. Le Theule, p 14); it is difficult to see how operational expenses could be reduced without abandoning objectives; we are then forced to consider them as having

to be more or less stable, if not increasing. According to Mr. Le Theule again, "p 17) "the credit in section III have actually varied little from 1963 to 1964, despite a new reduction of forces. The latter will not decrease to any considerable extent after December 31, 1964. It is then to be expected that section III will increase in future years, for it certainly will be necessary one day to improve the status of military personnel and, in addition, the operational expenses of the nuclear strategic force, when it reaches its full development, will be considerable. Many suggest a reduction of the length of military service, in order to effect new economies...the resources which one could expect from this would not be very important".

Following the reasoning of Mr. Le Theule, one can estimate that operational expenses will increase at a minimum of about 0.5 billion per year, as indicated in the following table:

	<u>Billions</u>
1964	10.7
1965	11.2
1966	11.7
1967	12.2
1968	12.7
1969	13.2
1970	13.7
Total	85.4

Thus we arrive at the following general total:

	(billions of francs)
Heading III	85.4
Heading V	<u>93.5</u>
Total	178.9

This figure is larger by nearly 18 billion francs than the package of 161 billion foreseen by Mr. Messmer. This is the result to which a preliminary analysis has led us. Now, there is [REDACTED] a very good chance

that this result has been put at too low a figure because it was obtained without taking into account two fundamental hypotheses concerning the correctness of the 1964 budget and the probable margin of error. An analysis which is pushed further will demonstrate that these hypotheses are well founded.

II. The Incertitudes

First Hypothesis. Up to now, we have assumed that the 1964 budget, on which our reasoning is based, is an honest and realistic budget in which expenditures have not been underestimated. As for Mr. Clostermann, he does not admit this, for he writes in regard to the Air budget that he does not see how the four large projects of the government (page 3) can be brought to completion, and he states that the credits (of 1964) to be paid cannot cover any of the operations already programmed or planned. "The absurdity of these figures leaps to the eye," he affirms (page 5), after an analysis of the "new operations" of the Air portion of the financial legislation, and he "readily understands the embarrassment of the official services". He therefore has every reason to believe that the figures in the 1964 budget are lower than the announced requirements, while the expenditures of the ensuing years will also have to be raised.

Second Hypothesis. We also assumed that the margin of error within which the expenditures connected with the new operations could vary would remain within reasonable limits.

Mr. Clostermann considers, not without optimism, that, of the four large projects which must be financed, "two can be calculated exactly: the five divisions, heading V of the Air budget for 1964 and the draft

law for aeronautical construction..." (page 3). He does not feel the same certainty over the missiles with nuclear warheads and the SSBS (strategic surface-to-surface ballistic missiles) or [REDACTED] the missile-carrying submarines...

Now, Mr. Clostermann has reason to be skeptical, and American experience, like our own, leads us to believe that expenditures for the strategic nuclear force must be quite considerably larger than the figures currently being planned for. American experience has often been mentioned and its validity has sometimes been questioned - "the French studies have been simpler and better adapted, while the selection of paths to be followed was facilitated by the previous experimentation of the Americans"... (Siccle de Damocles [Age of Damocles], page 75); so let us consider only the experience of our country. The first draft legislation, submitted in late 1960 and passed in 1961, provided [REDACTED] only for making the atomic bombs operational by means of the credits, which it should have multiplied by two or three.

First Law-Program

	Authorization of Program		Payment Credits	
	Provided	Granted (in billions)	Provided	Opened
1960	0.420	0.420	0.322	0.322
1961	1.005	1.012	0.602	0.570
1962	0.971	1.253	0.839	0.718
1963	0.897	2.406	0.856	1.093
1964	0.695	3.360	0.894	2.536 (1)
Totals	3.988	8.451	3.513	5.239

(1) Provisions of finance law 1964

The rate of these figures is revealing: The error in this field has been not 10 or 20 percent but 200 or 300 percent; unless, ^{and} ~~in~~ this hypothesis is not to be excluded neither for the first nor [^] for the second law program, the leaders of defense policy deliberately underestimated their figures, in order to obtain approval more easily: Perhaps they are convinced that once the first expenses have been made, it will be difficult to stop the completion of the program for ^{mere} ~~simple~~ financial reasons.

[^] Now, without even speaking of H Bombs ("normally, Pierrelatte should operate before the end of 1967, its cost price, five billion ¹⁹⁶³ ~~nineteen-sixty-three~~ francs, should be respected. However, all problems will not be solved then. The problem of miniaturizing the bomb will remain...It is probable that it will be necessary to establish a tritium plant", report of Mr. Le Theule, p 22), atomic submarines, ("one might ask if the planned date, 1969, is not too

optimistic"; ibid p 23) or missiles, it seems impossible to even determine the size of the expenses for the construction of the test center in the Pacific. "Numerous difficulties have to be solved, which are due mainly to distance. A large enterprise is involved, which is responsible for part of the increase of the credits necessary for the nuclear strategic force. If a comparison is desired concerning the scope of the work to be carried out, one could say that it is a problem of construction a little Pierrelatte on an atoll at the end of the world!" (Ibid, p 23). And we know now that it certainly will be necessary to construct the tritium plant; its cost will not be less than one billion.

The Choice

The most prudent estimates based on the almost complete acceptance of official statements, leads us to state that the government will be forced, if it respects its program to exceed ~~by~~ ^{the} at least 18 billions ~~the~~ ^{selected} package which it ~~determined~~ ^{selected} for itself in the period 1964-1970 - In fact, as we see it, it could very well exceed this figure several times. Unless it accepts a very heavy inflation of military expenses, ^{and} ~~and~~ inflation whose economic and political repercussions could be formidable the government must make economies. But what economies are possible, even in holding to the figure of 18 billion?

1) Could One Make Economies in
Equipment Expenses?

Current needs and production already contracted for are practically incompressible; it is not possible to make any large economies here.

The nuclear strategic force is on a priority basis; if it was necessary to reduce these expenses ^{of} ~~by~~ 18 billions, it would be necessary to give up almost all the programs! Such a decision, which would have to be made very rapidly, would cause an abrupt slow-down in certain sections of industry, and without doubt social difficulties, at the same time that it would signify the abandonment of projects which had been judged indispensable.

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2) Could They be Found in Expenditures for Operation?

An important and increasing portion of the expenditures for operation is connected with the force de frappe, and therefore it cannot be compressed. In order to achieve an economy of the order of 18 billion francs, it would doubtless be necessary to reduce the number of effective troops in uniform by about 40 percent, particularly in the ground forces... This would bring about serious personnel difficulties and doubtless would prevent the attainment of ~~some~~ certain ~~ones~~ of the goals which have been established by the government. This would also call for a thorough reform of the military service. Whereas a short period of service is extremely expensive, contrary to the opinion which is frequently expressed, we should orient ourselves toward a period of service of 15 or 18 months, ^{/i.e., as to specialties? 7} very much differentiated, eliminating about 50 percent of the contingent. That sort of service is contrary to the French tradition of equality of responsibilities. If it is not adopted, there will scarcely be any other solution than a professional army.

It appears to us, then, that it is impossible for the government, within the limits of the program which it has planned and the time limits it has set, to carry out the program which it has drawn up. It therefore should either abandon a large portion of that program or accept a very appreciable augmentation of expenditures. Doubtless it will be obliged to compromise - that is, to do partly one and partly the other - and without any satisfactory result.

In about 1970, it is generally said, the responsibility for military policy will become too heavy to bear. We think that the first serious problems are beginning to arise right now.